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MX

Limits...

How far can you bend? A phenomenal shot of Standing Construct Yamaha's Valentin Guillod proving that the Assen sand is really not that soft through the trick waves section. Compression? Just a little. Photos like this – considering the YZ250F is moving at some speed and from quite a height – show just how damn hard the sport, and the riders, actually are

Photo by Ray Archer



MotoGP

Not done, not dusted...

Snapped here in the dry Valentino Rossi was one of the few thankful for the rain at Silverstone last weekend. An 86th victory in the premier class also meant sixteen podiums in a row for the Italian and the maintenance of a new record streak for the series leader

Photo by Northcott/Monster Energy







Sand Fly...

Shaun Simpson did it again at Assen. With Herlings and Cairoli off the scene then the Scot has definitely earned the mantle of the world's fastest sand racer thanks to two victories now on the terrain in the premier class of Grand Prix. The 27 year old is the first Brit to take a double in the category

Photo by Ray Archer





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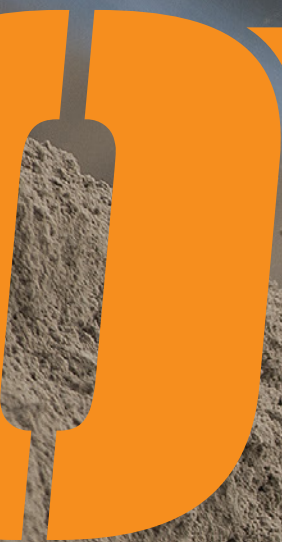
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MX

GRAND PRIX OF THE NETHERLANDS

TT CIRCUIT ASSEN · AUGUST 31st · Rnd 16 of 18

MXGP winner: Shaun Simpson, KTM

MX2 winner: Tim Gajser, Honda



PLAY

IDS

OUT OF SIGHT



By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Ray Archer

TWO ROUNDS TO GO AND MXGP HAS FALLEN TO THE PROWESS OF ROMAIN FEBVRE AND YAMAHA. THE FIRST FRENCH WORLD CHAMPION IN THE PREMIER CLASS SINCE 2002 – AND OF THE FOUR-STROKE ERA – PROVED HIS SAND SKILLS JUST BEHIND SHAUN SIMPSON ON THE TOP OF THE PODIUM AGAIN WHILE MX2 INTENSIFIED

It was the date on the calendar that carried the biggest question mark and also caused the noses of some to screw-up in distaste. MXGP in the confines of a permanent motorsport facility had met with varying degrees of success in recent years and attempts. The advantages of such an arrangement are clear: access, space, and amenities. The disadvantages are mainly connected with the track and the difficulty of making a course that is safe and challenging for the riders – thereby producing memorable action - and doesn't compromise on atmosphere for the fans. Losail in Qatar has endured longer than any other facility (three editions and counting) for obvious reasons and a set of resources unlike many other circuits in the world. The last venture – at the Lausitzring for the Grand Prix of Germany in 2013 – was a mishit with the stadium seating too far from the track.

Understandably there was concern about the inauguration with MXGP at Assen; a name synonymous with road racing for almost a century and at the current TT circuit (in adjusted guises) since 1955. Particularly with Holland boasting other capable and traditional motocross sites e.g. Lierop. The organisers at Assen however certainly know how to create a motorsport event and they succeeded admirably for what was the sixteenth round of eighteen on the 2015 slate and the last race of the year on European soil...well, sand.

The importation of 25,000 cubic tonnes of sand – some 1500 trucks apparently – through four days and nights showed their dedication towards moulding a racing layout that would fit the standard of the infrastructure around it. The employment of former Youthstream Track Manager Greg Atkins to build and oversee maintenance of the fine sand (many riders described riding the surface as being like a beach race) was a solid move as Atkins' last gesture before leaving the MXGP paddock was to create the trajectory at Neuquen in Argentina, which many riders have labelled as the best so far this season.

Placing the majority of the track parallel and tight to the grandstand was an inspired – and necessary – strategy. The fans had that important proximity to the action that is still one of the sport's strongest facets but also a very generous view and – for

some – rooftop cover if the weather turned, as it would do by Sunday night. The public responded to what MX2 second moto winner Max Anstie called “a novelty race” with decent pre-event ticket sales and almost filled the stadium section. The effect of the wall of noise, movement and expectation caused Dutch MXGP hero Rockstar Suzuki's Glenn Coldenhoff to describe the experience as “giving me goosebumps” when the riders ploughed around the corners, waves and single jump from the Gertimmer Bocht chicane. Coupled with the sunshine, the Grand Prix had a pleasant feel-good factor for the European send-off and Coldenhoff's podium (just his second in a maiden term in the MXGP class) and Red Bull KTM teenager Davy Pootjes holeshots (two from three across the weekend) delivered an extra buzz for the partisan watchers.

There was a compromise with the track. Despite adhering to FIM regulations the lap-time was too short and the wear of six classes (many GP riders again remarking that there were too many sessions once more) on the terrain was evident. MXGP winner and sand master Shaun Simpson commented that the boards covering the asphalt were starting to poke through in sections and the lolling speed of sand riding was sometimes interrupted with some violent wheelspin as the tyres broke through. The northern zone that folded up and down the MotoGP start grid was also perilously tight against permanent objects such as fences, walls and poles. These were slights that can easily be rectified and are allowed a ‘pass’ for Assen's first taste of MXGP and allegedly the circuit personnel were pleased post-race with the response to the Grand Prix. It is not hard to imagine Assen carrying the Dutch Grand Prix again in 2016 and with the expected set of refinements and an even bigger crowd (official pegged at 37,000 for the weekend) then it cannot be long until the Motocross of Nations returns to Holland for the first time since 2004.

Another talking point? Despite some hazards (Rockstar Suzuki's Jeremy Seewer, who was third in the second MX2 moto, said there were “kickers everywhere”) there was not an injury to speak of at Assen for a tangible contrast to a sizeable number of Grands Prix in 2015.





Romain Febvre was vaguely irritated Saturday afternoon when the Frenchman was non-plussed about the Assen terrain. A poor start had meant the 23 year old had to explore some limits of his speed to rise up to fourth in the Qualification Heat and he was trying to get a handle on the fine and shifting course. Aside from this grumble it would have been hard to guess that he was within touching distance of a major career milestone and with a large contingent of Yamaha Motor Europe staff mingling around the factory awning as a reminder of what was at stake. He was as cool and composed as ever, doing media request left right and centre and chatting about his ambition to try a MotoGP bike. On Sunday and after the first moto the chance of winning MXGP in 2015 was up in the air. By finishing fifth and being unable to pass Glenn Coldenhoff in the first moto Febvre had been beaten for the third sandy race in succession by sole title rival HRC's Gautier Paulin. Then suddenly a lighting start in the second moto was half the battle won, especially with Paulin buried in the top ten. When the Honda rider's teammate, Evgeny Bobryshev, could not resist Febvre's charge for the lead then the outcome of the sprint and the championship was largely cemented.

It was a subdued celebration over the line for Febvre. He admitted that he spent two long laps looking over his shoulder and trying to deduce where Paulin's position and whether he was the two places in arrears that was necessary for '461' to numerically close the champi-

onship. He passed the flag unaware of his slot in the overall standings and whether he'd done enough. With 102 points over fourth-placed Paulin and just two rounds remaining he needed an embrace from mechanics and team staff for full confirmation.

Among the subsequent post-race melee it was hard to ignore Febvre's stats in a maiden MXGP year that started with a broken humerus and hernia in the winter and robbed him of extra preparation time for the eighteen round campaign. Eleven consecutive podiums matched the total of teammate Jeremy Van Horebeek from 2014 and with six wins he was as prolific as he was consistent with that growling YZ450FM.

Responding to a comment that he earned his spurs by virtue of the absence of champions like Cairoli, Villopoto and other GP winners like Clement Desalle and Max Nagl Febvre said: "The sport is like this...and it is not the first year there have been many injuries. In 2013 I was second in the championship [MX2] and I got injured. We need to accept this side of it."

Perma-grin in place the slight athlete and his family and friends indulged in a celebration party thrown by Yamaha in the VIP suite that evening. Although we cannot confirm rumours that Romain ended up wearing his girlfriend's dress are true, there isn't an MXGP follower that would begrudge this blossoming talent some well-earned downtime.





The Grand Prix of Belgium two rounds and five weeks previously was an inspiring sight for British fans as Shaun Simpson, dogged privateer, British Champion (unbeaten in six rounds of the UK series this year) took his aging Hitachi Construction Machinery Revo 2015 KTM and gave his factory rivals a whipping around the roughest and hardest circuit in the calendar, perhaps on the entire international stage. The 1-1 scorecard was the strongest display of sand riding you are likely to see from a rider who hasn't originated from the Benelux region of Europe. It made KTM at last sit up and take notice of a consistent, presentable and articulate athlete (so much so that he is constant source of opinion and info here in OTOR) and the factory promised more in the short-term... and the long-term when it comes to 2016.

Coming to Assen and Simpson was dealing with expectation and pressure. The milestone on offer was the chance to become the first British rider to win two Grands Prix in the premier class this century. A mere twenty-five points would have lifted him over the absent Tony Cairoli to fourth in the championship standings: a personal best and matching his efforts from 2008 in MX2.

The first moto attacking display from a third corner crash and eleventh place was vintage stuff and probably some of the best riding Simpson has produced in his career. Once through to second place he began chasing Gautier Paulin there was a sense of inevitability. The winning performance however sucked just enough effort and energy to knock an edge from his potential in the second race and he didn't have the extra second-a-lap to follow Romain Febvre. With third place the points were still enough for the 'overall' by some distance from the new world champion. It meant valuable marks in the manufacturers championship for KTM and invaluable presence at the front of the premier class with their three factory riders out of action.

Assen reinforced Simpson's importance to the brand (heightened through their efforts to help him race at the Unadilla AMA National) and the Scot is now guaranteed much-desired and long-awaited factory material for 2016...although in which KTM team is still not decided. "I think I have done enough to show that I am one of the boys who can win GPs and races and not just that but also be consistent," said Simpson who can win a second straight British Championship this weekend and is set to lead Team GBR at the Motocross of Nations in September. "Over the last four or five years I just been getting better and better and you cannot ignore that now. I'm looking forward to next year and getting on the same equipment and factory material again. We want to come out fast next year from the get-go."





Traumatic it may be for the riders involved but the curves and pitfalls of the 2015 MX2 title story is enjoyable viewing for MXGP fans. Standing Construct Yamaha's Valentin Guillod and Monster Energy DRT's Max Anstie suffered costly crashes at Assen that nudged them further from realistically challenging for the absent Jordi Tixier's crown. The dispute is narrowing to new series leader HRC Gariboldi's Tim Gajser and Red Bull KTM's last great hope Pauls Jonass. Nobody could have predicted Sunday's events at Assen where Gajser turned around some miserable form on Saturday to post a fifth win of the year and Jonass completed a remarkable second moto without a front brake after falling on the first turn. Gajser is Honda's first red plate holder since Marvin Musquin in 2009 and by thirteen points over his Latvian rival and rookie to full-time Grand Prix.

100 points left to go and the hard-pack of Leon up next but with Gajser having trouble to stay on two wheels lately and KTM suffering harsh quirks of fortune then Mexico is impossible to call and will ensure that Grand Prix will grip until the finale at Glen Helen in three weeks. A notable mention for the Kemea Yamaha team under the stewardship of Marnicq Bervoets for fielding two rookies in the form of Brent Van Doninck and Benoit Paturel in 2015. The Belgian and the Frenchman have been top ten revelations this season and the former deservedly claimed the squad's first piece of silverware thanks to his sand acumen and a calmer head compared to his flapping Lommel performance.

Dirk Gruebel and Wayne Banks get Jonass back into the race while Gajser pulls off one of his best GP performances of the season (above)



After the docile Grand Prix of Lombardia seven days beforehand with just MXGP and MX2 on the timetable (the circus was supposed to be in Brazil for the August fixture, hence the absence of EMX) the FIM World Championship ramped up the support card in Holland with the finales of EMX 125, 150, 250 and even a Veteran's World Cup. Nick Kouwenberg claimed the EMX250 title and now could not be more ready for Grand Prix. At least four of the contenders for the '15 crown will bounce into MX2 in 2016. It was Kemea's Damon Graulus who was the dominant force with a powerful 1-1 for the overall. Red Bull KTM prodigy Jorge Prado delivered an important victory for Spain by tying up the 125 championship over Josiah Natzke – credit for Conrad Mewse also stepping up to the plate for his first moto win. Emil Weckman was the fastest from the Honda 150 collective.

EMX has taken some flak in 2015; blamed for the eroding state of the tracks on a GP weekend and for ravaging the space of compact venues like Arco di Trento. There is little doubt that the presence of EMX gives the spectator more value for money on the entrance ticket and permits young racing talent a platform and window to learn from the very best.

There is still debate over whether it devalues the Grand Prix spectacle and the effect it is having on the surfaces for the 'main attraction'. Some common ground between safe and challenging conditions for MXGP and those for kids as young as thirteen also needs to be explored and found. Grand Prix now also has to be careful on the quality and type of circuit it has to visit. Assen was more than capable, but some of the older and more compact venues end up being a mess of logistics.





Bobryshev on the gas and now pretty guaranteed third place in the world championship. Jorge Prado takes another step towards stardom (left) and Jens Getteman goes down but would post a career-best fifth in the second moto







Perhaps Gautier Paulin's sore knee played a part in his 2-4 and surrender of the 2015 MXGP title plight. The Frenchman has not matched the dominance he showed at round five in the sand at Valkenswaard earlier this year. An important first season at HRC is almost over



CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MXGP OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Shaun Simpson, GBR	KTM
2	Romain Febvre, FRA	Yamaha
3	Glenn Coldenhoff, NED	Suzuki
4	Gautier Paulin, FRA	Honda
5	Evgeny Bobryshev, RUS	Honda

MX2 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Tim Gajser, SLO	Honda
2	Max Anstie, GBR	Kawasaki
3	Brent Van Doninick, BEL	Yamaha
4	Julien Lieber, BEL	Yamaha
5	Jeremy Seewer, SUI	Suzuki

MXGP STANDINGS AFTER 16 OF 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Romain Febvre (C)	638
2 Gautier Paulin	536
3 Evgeny Bobryshev	499
4 Shaun Simpson	437
5 Tony Cairoli	416

MX2 STANDINGS AFTER 16 OF 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Tim Gajser	518
2 Pauls Jonass	508
3 Max Anstie	474
4 Valentin Guillod	446
5 Jeremy Seewer	440

Jonass pops up the 250SX-F on the waves while Coldenhoff refuels for a tough second moto in MXGP



WHERE TO MOVE...?

By Adam Wheeler

Will Motocross eat itself? Will kids (or parents) look at what the sport can deliver as a profession and know that it will involve hospital trips, breakages, operations and simply be turned away? It is a question for the long term and one that is certainly not new to a discipline where injury is just an accepted part of the course; as a track has a start gate, a jump, a rut and a finish line it will also have a 'section' where some physical problem has to be negotiated.

It does feel like the 'the question' has become more urgent this season with the recent speculation over the future engine capacity for the premier MXGP class and the FIM's increased surge towards safety and quest to kill speed in Grand Prix. I put it out recently on Twitter but the voices in the paddock – from the very top to the greenest of GP rookies – seem to identify four areas why more riders seem to be getting hurt and the sport therefore suffers as a result. By 'suffering' I mean not only through the absence of athletes like Cairoli, Desalle, Villopoto etc but also the repercussions – riders needing to heal and seizing time-off like an unwanted reprieve. The post-injury period has repercussions on other events such as the Motocross of Nations and winter supercross; it feels like racers now want to down tools and have corrective surgery as soon as the chequered flag has fallen on their respective championship obligations. So the four factors are: 450cc engines, modern dirt bike performance, tracks and their preparation and finally the riders' and their technique, attitudes and ways to push the physicality of manoeuvring a bike at full pelt.

Changing engine capacity to a 300 or 350 will involve a major strong-arm offensive against the

Japanese and at a time when Grand Prix has a narrow philosophy that the gate is refined to mostly factory teams. MXGP has a spread of seven manufacturers submitting works efforts; it would take a battering if one or two brands decide to pull out simply because fabricating a new motorcycle does not make business sense. Then there is the discussion about whether there is actually much speed differential between MXGP and the 250s of MX2, even if the larger bikes are physical harder to throw around and find a limit. Changing MXGP to full works 250cc motorcycles could be a solution but this is still a major landscape shift for the sport.

The performance of the bikes themselves is something that can be slowed but hardly stopped. One of MXGP's strengths is liberty towards prototypes and factories have profited from this (electric starts, and Yamaha for example ran a fuel injected 250 back in 2010 before their YZ250F came to market in 2014). Suspension has progressed significantly (2015 saw the first full air systems front and rear from WP) as have electronics. More stringent rules can be put in place (perhaps rev limiters) but this is unlikely to have much of an effect on the high levels of attrition that have sparked such debate about what is wrong with motocross.

What about the riders? Unrealistic. You cannot expect professional athletes with all their effort, dedication and sacrifice to not want to find the very edge of their possibilities and endurance. And it only takes one or two to start riding over the limit, getting lucky and enjoying some success for the bar to go up and the risks increase. I do agree with some opinions though that the rid-



ers could show a bit more respect towards each other and hold higher mutual regard for the fact that bones can break.

So that brings us to tracks and probably the first and quickest starting point to reversing the trend towards a stricken MXGP. Again the state of Grand Prix circuits is a subject as worn as some of the more antiquated venues themselves. Fingers have been pointed at the European Championship schedule (EMX250 is now at nine rounds) for the consequences of increased track time and the lack of maintenance opportunities between sessions but the argument was weakened slightly at Mantova almost two weeks ago where just MXGP and MX were in action and still three prominent riders had their seasons prematurely ended. Make no mistake: Grands Prix see the best level of prep made by respective clubs and staff at their venue during the year and Youthstream have established a good standard across the board. However the degree of knowledge of track prep and the co-operation between the parties involved varies wildly across the countries, and also involves 'dangerous' emotions such as pride, arrogance and, sometimes, ignorance.

The fix is expensive and perhaps not even practical; a Dirt Wurx style crew that are permanently split between pre-GP work several weeks before a meeting and then fast-acting emergency reparation at the event itself (because the European Championship is not going anywhere). This team needs unparalleled access to all tracks, from Argentina to Malaysia, and the resources they require to get the job done (this might be the biggest stumbling block). And it needs somebody to pay for it all. If we look at the tracks themselves

then the proliferation of jumps is part desire to evolve the sport, partly to add that spectacular edge but also in an effort to slow the average speed. Again sound preparation of the soil (where possible; another hitch for some older, hard-packed courses) would allow more straights and the removal of excess leaps or sections. Of course Youthstream have their track staff but 2016 and beyond might need some official FIM-labelled specialists to go-to-work and really make a difference. It would require hefty investment but surely it is worth trying, even for a year, to see if it brings any results. If the level of the circuits increases to satisfy the individuals that are risking all to tackle them, then it might ease pressure on some other facets of MXGP – like those mentioned – and not put the sport near the brink of the unknown.

I'm loath to write it because it sounds like a cop-out but it is an accumulation of these talking points that is leading to the problem that motocross (Grand Prix and AMA) is simply too hazardous and is placing such a toll on Pro racers. It used to be noise, environmental and track closures as the most alarming topics threatening the base of the professional pyramid but top level competition lately seems to involve more pain than pleasure and no athlete has escaped the slings and arrows.



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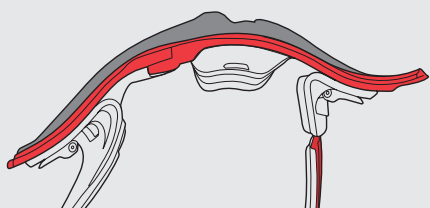


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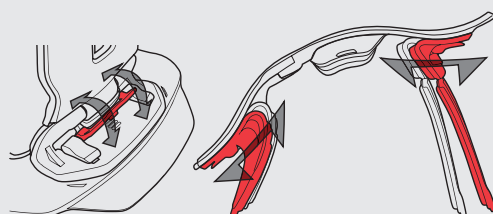
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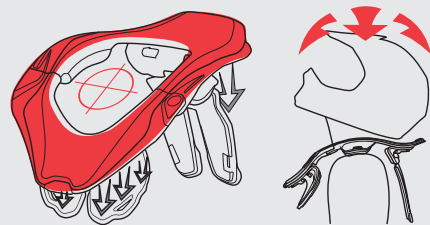
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By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Ray Archer

THE NEXT ONE: TIM GAJSER

HRC GARIBOLDI'S TIM GAJSER: A POWERHOUSE OF A RIDER AND RACER THAT CAN WIN FIVE GRANDS PRIX IN A SINGLE SEASON AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN BUT THEN ALSO BIN HIS CRF250RW IN WARM-UP AT MATTERLEY BASIN AND MISS A ROUND OF THE SERIES ALTOGETHER. WE CHATTED TO THE '243' ON HIS RISE TO THE PEAK OF MX2 AND THOSE AROUND WHO HAVE HELPED IT HAPPEN. A FIRST SLOVENIAN WORLD CHAMP? FIRST HONDA MX2 WINNER? IT IS ALL SO CLOSE WITH TWO ROUNDS REMAINING...



A high-action photograph of motocross rider Tim Gajser. He is wearing a light blue and red jersey with 'SPORTR' on the sleeve, 'KMEC' and 'NILES' on the chest, and 'HONDA' on the leg. He is also wearing white boots with black accents. The bike is a Honda, with the front wheel and knobby tire visible in the foreground. The background is a blurred blue structure, likely part of a track or stadium.

MX2 TITLE FIGHT: TIM GAJSER

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At the time of publication the Slovenian is in a position to win the title in only his third GP term and second on the red factory bikes. Honda have not celebrated a world championship for fifteen years.

Gajser deserves special attention. Not because he is one of the chief protagonists in MX2 but he is the only one to have followed in that freak trend begun in 2009-2010 when teenagers like Ken Roczen and Herlings started celebrating Grand Prix triumphs in their mid-teens. Gajser was prolific through the juniors adding the 125 European Championship to 85 and 65 crowns. He did not have the immediate impact of Roczen and Herlings but this might have something to do with his origins from a country hardly rich in deep motocross heritage. He won everywhere on a two-stroke and while he might have been more memorable for fence-flattening accidents at Matterley (perhaps a bogey circuit?) during his 2013 MX2 apprenticeship, it was clear that Tim was going to standout quickly, and while still so young.

Dissatisfied with KTM at the end of that debut term in 2013 he severed ties and opted to join Honda and the Italian Gariboldi crew.

Walking into the blood-red awning in the Grand Prix paddock the saying 'blood thicker than water' comes to mind. Tim Gajser's racing effort is not about one athlete. His family is constant, with the presence of animated father Bogo and his brother on practice mechanic duties while his mother and younger sister are easily spotted with their distinctive yellow '243' caps. They are a clan, a gaggle. "It is a completely different family compared to what we usually see," offers Team Manager and Owner Giacomo Gariboldi. "It is very traditional and they want to stay together all the time and they all work for him. With these kinds of roots I don't think he will split from them. Many riders

start racing with their Dads but then they find a girlfriend or something else they split away. I think Tim will be different. He will always be connected and you have to understand this when you start working with him. If you want to take him away from the family then it will not work. I think other teams or brands might have tried this."

We spoke to the Italian, HRC General Manager Roger Harvey, long-term rival Rockstar Energy Suzuki's Jeremy Seewer, tested Bogo Gajser's limited-but-fun English to the max when talking about his son and then finally sat down with Tim himself, who comes across as a light-hearted and shy young man who has an endearing habit of starting each answer with a giggle. The aim was to try and understand some of the unusual dynamic that surrounds the eastern European, why he is so phenomenally fast – to the point where he could be the new world champion – and what he could still possibly go on to achieve. Followers of Grand Prix knew that Gajser was a treasure for the series already in 2014 and thankfully he has made the step to race winner and potentially more in less than twelve months.

"I grew up with him on 85s," says Seewer, twenty-one years old, owner of three podiums in 2015 and also in the mix for the MX2 throne. "I was top five and going for the podium but he was winning already at a young age. We always seem to meet each other at the races because he was riding German Championship rounds as well. Now we are in GPs and he is winning again at eighteen. He is on a good level at the moment and he deserves it but from my point of view I want to do better! It is strange to see people who were so fast years ago and now cannot do it in GPs and others that seem to have come out of nowhere and are doing very well. Tim has been fast all the way through."

MX2 TITLE FIGHT: TIM GAJSER



"When we went for him in the beginning we knew he still had a contract with KTM but we also knew that he was thinking of splitting," says Gariboldi, offering some background on the Honda link-up. "I said to everybody "if we want a young rider...then is the guy". I got the phone number through a contact for Golden-Tyre and we met towards the end of that season [2013]. My first thoughts were that he was a very shy and nice guy, very well educated and clever for his age. He was still studying which was not very common in the paddock. He said it was very important for him to keep going with the schooling. My first impression was really good. You saw somebody who really wanted to reach the top and it showed through all the results in his career until that point and he has won in every category that he has raced."

"To be honest we did not know how deeply we would get involved in MX2 but we were looking for an opportunity," says Harvey. "We were very late sorting the programme and making the decision about MX2 officially and looking around Tim was one of the riders that became available. We had seen flashes of brilliance... and also seen what was a seventeen year old kid at the same time! We've seen many riders with those flashes and at that age they can do it, they have all the tricks on the bike and everything they need and some continue to crash whereas others mature and stop. I've seen it so many times over the years and the feeling at that time was that Tim would settle. We saw him as a good opportunity."

"I said to Massimo Castelli [Team Director] that for me Tim could be the next Herlings and everything in his career points that way," says Gariboldi. "When you win every category you are in every year it means that you become familiar with winning and eventually that would come through to the MX2 class."

Clearly bubbling with the X-factor and a riding style in the Herlings mould that is fully expressive, aggressive and attacking, Gajser had to develop professionally while juggling two lives: one of the burgeoning star and a rising profile in a country with a population of just over two million and prolificacy in winter sports and the other of a part-time student desperately trying to graduate.

"Two years ago Tim said to me "please, all the other riders have stopped the school..." and I said: "No, you must go. I don't care about other riders", says Bogo. "It has been a few years now but he is finally happy to finish!"

"It is amazing how his character has changed now that his school and exams have finished," offers Harvey. "This was a kid who was doing his classes and exams until 3pm on a Friday and then driving overnight to the Grand Prix and finishing on the podium. He's changed that now."

Tim, what changed for 2015?

Last year was the first for me with Honda and everything was new and different because from 50cc all the way until MX2 in 2013 I was riding KTMs. I didn't know any other brand and it was a big step to change the team. 2014 was already pretty good and I didn't expect that much [for 2015]. We started slowly but during the races we were improving and I was also getting better. We worked hard and the results came in the second half of the season.

How did it feel with people talking about you, Herlings, Ferrandis in the same lines for the title this year?

It was huge. Jeffrey is really famous, a two time world champion and a big name in motocross already. I feel that if you work hard and train a lot then it pays off. You just need to keep working, working, working.



MX2 TITLE FIGHT: TIM GAJSER

Your Dad said that two years ago you asked to stop school but he said no. How difficult was it to live both lives: student and Grand Prix winner?

Really hard. Moving from the 85s to the 125s was not so big and we didn't have that many races but when we switched to MX2 it was really tough – both for the preparation we had to do and all the travelling. Most of time I was in school through the winter when I was back home in Slovenia. That was when I did most of my exams and the spring and summer was about training, travelling and racing. I had to study also while doing that. For sure it was not easy to think about world championship motocross and then also remember and think about your studies. It was two big things to deal with and I'm glad one has finished!

What did you specialise in? Engineering? Maths?

It was actually economics and business.

Was it easy for you?

I got a lot of help at the school and the staff there knew I was racing motocross at a high level. The teachers were great and so were my classmates.

So now you can organise your contracts and deals quite well...

Haha. Actually the way it works with me is that we have a family meeting and we all speak about an offer or a contract and we make a choice. Of course it helps to be good with the numbers! I was studying a lot of mathematics.

Even working out points during a moto...

Haha...never a problem with that during the race.

FEATURE



Perhaps a fair word for Gajser senior – a competent racer in his own right – is ‘intense’. We’ve been assured in the past that the raised voice and dramatic gestures when talking with his son is merely Bogo’s way of communicating, rather than blowing a fuse. The two are often joined at the hip. “It is a family unit,” reveals Harvey. “We got to know them and had a good first meeting. Pappa has a reputation and there is no use hiding behind it but we have a great understanding...most of the time! Tim will say: “I need my Dad...” because he is helping him substantially; that’s fine and his brother is coming into it now as well. We are not restricted in the way we work because of it and Bogo knows what Tim wants, usually they will say the same stuff to the engineers even though they haven’t had the chance to talk. It is uncanny.”

“I think the other teams were scared-off by the father and that was our advantage because from the beginning I got on very well with his Dad,” says Gariboldi. “We have a good relationship and I think that is also because – for the first time – they found somewhere that would allow them to be part of the team. I said to his Dad “as you train Tim, you need to be paid for that” I wanted to integrate him into the set up and it worked for everybody.”

“He understands motocross and this is the good side,” he continues. “Sometimes it is not easy to handle everything but you have to be clever and accept what he says and wants for the bike and the rider. Sometimes we have gone against him and had some little fights but for the most part it is OK.”

Harvey: “We’ve seen father-and-son combinations over the years and some work and some don’t but this one does.”

“It was strange in the beginning because in the meetings with all the Japanese engineers he wanted to attend and said he had made all the settings for the bikes for Tim in the past,” Gariboldi goes on. “The Japanese were a bit unsure about him because he wanted to talk and decide

and the Japanese work in a special way. So I had to distance him initially but then I think they also understood that it was important he was there because during training he could stand at the side of the track and immediately see what was working or not working on the bike. Tim would come in and his comments would be the same. Both of them are a good team and both can give the engineers good information.”

“Tim works very hard but it is also hard to do it as father and son,” Bogo himself admits. “Around the ages of 13, 14, 15 it was easy. Now growing up sometimes I have to be harder and it is difficult! We had a talk after England [British GP] and we decided that we needed a new way to work...and then the results started to come. We said that we both needed to change and it worked out.”

There was disappointment with the visa in Qatar (he arrived very late after a frantic scramble to travel), the heat in Thailand (he couldn’t ride the second race after treatment) the crash in warm-up in England (concussion)...mentally it must be hard to deal with that so how do you get back to a good level?

Like you said, the beginning was tough and we seemed to have many different kinds of problems. It was hard but I had learned a little bit in the last few years how to ‘switch off’ mentally. 2013 was bad. Almost every race something happened: the bike would stop or I’d crash. It was the biggest downer of my career and I learned how to ignore some of it because everything is in your head, you know? You have to be strong mentally and focus. I don’t know how to explain it really but I just ‘turn off’ and change a little bit and that worked from Argentina and the race was good in Arco [his first GP win]. After that I think I put too much pressure on myself because the bad weekends came up again at Valkenswaard and the first moto in Spain was so-so. The two ‘zeros’ at Matterley Basin was another low point of this season. After that I changed again, this time in my relationship with my Dad and it worked out well and we are going in the right direction.

What was said? Did you want him more as a father or a trainer/coach?

We talked about many things and we felt things were not in the right direction. So we switched and now it is working...and I don't really want talk about how!

Your brother seems to be here a lot more so is he also helping out?

Yes, he finished school last year so in 2014 he couldn't come to many races. This year he is helping me a lot. He is my practice mechanic. We get on well and have a lot of fun together. It is a big plus to have many members from your family close to you at the races. He always trains with me on the bike but when it comes to the fitness and I ask if he wants to come then he just smiles at me.

You seem quite similar in age...

He was born in December, so just nine months older.

If someone told you in Qatar that you'd win five GPs this year and be going for the title what would you say...?

Haha. It is a step-by-step thing. We would want to be on the bike and having fun-

Stop. I want a good answer to this. Five Grands Prix and leading the world championship...

Hahaha. It is great! OK, I would have expected to win something this year but not so much. Honestly you come into a season like this with great expectation...but also not so much. You don't want your hopes going too high because you can become really disappointed. You have to be realistic and maybe even try and lower your expectations because then when you do better it feels better: it is all mental. Last year I took quite a few podiums and won the last moto of the season so there were expectations for 2015. I try to keep calm...but also what I said about looking to have fun is true because anything can happen at any moment and we've seen that this year.

Talking of expectations...you have to think about being world champion this year...

I'm sorry for Jeffrey because he was really strong this season and if he hadn't had broken the collarbone or damaged the finger then he would have already been close to being the champion. But this is motocross.

I understand when you say you have to focus race by race but also it must be hard not to think and dream about what could happen...

Yeah...you do have it at the back of your mind. But it is not good to think too much. Training, racing and consistency those have to be the most important things.

Honda can rightly value you as one of their big stars. There is perhaps no other off-road athlete in red performing like you this year. How does that make you feel? Especially because it might give you the power to ask about other career choices like MXGP or the AMA...

It is a good feeling...but I am aware of trying to keep my feet on the ground. I don't want to 'fly'. When I first came into the world championship I was asking for autographs and posters from the other riders! I want to try and be the same and it is important not to forget the people that bring you to a high point or maybe where I am now, because they have also sacrificed something. The beginning is key and so important to a career...when someone manages to do something like give you bikes for free I don't forget that.

Ah, bikes. Anybody who has watched an MX2 Grand Prix moto trackside will know that Gajser likes to push the CRF250RW to extremes. "He is hard on the RPM of the bike but he has always been that way," says Harvey. "Take the Swedish GP this year. When he was having a ding-dong with Jeffrey then you could really hear the bike over the jumps, when that settled down then you didn't really get it. Its something we have had to work on and cater for. He's has changed a bit but needs to work on being more sympathetic to the engine."



“He really needs power,” states Gariboldi. “He is a big kid. He wants and he really uses all the power you can give him. On the 450 he is even faster than the 250 which is good for his future.”



“I think he is really strong,” muses Seewer. “He is a muscular guy but he is also a good rider. I don’t like his style that much actually because sometimes it just seems that he pulls the pin on the throttle and uses the clutch all the way. I think after two laps his clutch is f**ked. That’s his way and I’m the opposite. I think I can go for ten races with the same clutch! He is pretty aggressive but is also a fair rider.”

I was talking with some of the Honda guys and you seem to be very hard on the bike...
Haha...

MX2 TITLE FIGHT: TIM GAJSER

Are you pushing harder this year or is it the same old Tim Gajser?

I’m going hard and I know it. The HRC stuff and the staff is so good. The people and the team work so well. I’m very happy. We are all like a big family there and everybody is very focussed on the race. We are smiling beforehand though and that’s something I like a lot. We don’t over-think the race but also we are very set on what we are doing this combination is only possible with the right people around you.

The right people. We’ve already established that Gajser operates best as part of a collective...but it should have been bigger. Tim keeps his 243 number as a marker of tribute to a brother he never knew. One that was apparently lost in an accident related to the sport and the family itself. “The number on the plate means a lot and if you see before the race then he is always looking to the sky,” says Gariboldi. “It is part of the strength of the family.”

“My family is always together and this is important for good results,” stresses Bogo. “Motocross is in our blood. It is one for all and all for one whether we are building a new house or Tim is going for a championship.”

What is the story about ‘243’?

I started riding with it in 2009 because I had a Croatian licence. I became European 65 champion with that licence. I was doing some Slovenian races and I was just given this number one day: 243. We didn’t see the meaning of it at the time. At that moment I had 116 and that was my number and I didn’t want to change it. One night my Dad thought about it and it became a big deal for us and all my family – the birthday of my brother. From that moment I took the number forever. I know he is with me every race, and every win and podium is for him.

Is that another reason why the family is close?

Actually yeah. It was a tough time but he died before I was born, in 1995 and I came along in '96. I did not know him...but it is tough. Anyway, always 'head up and go forward'.

People identify your strength as one of your attributes [Gariboldi: "Physically he is a bull! He can go for two motos without pause. It is unbelievable how fit he is"]. You train a lot with the 450...?

I'm a big guy and it is easier and better to ride this bike. I ride it everywhere and train with it all the time and then race the 250.

Some think the 450 is too much for the highest level...

I think we risk our lives every time we sit on any bike. But we love riding and racing and you don't think about the speed or the size when you are doing it because you are having a lot of fun. The bad side of the sport is for sure the injuries. If you look at the lap-times then it doesn't make sense, sometimes we are faster on the 250s. It depends on the track and how it is. If there are tighter turns then you can be faster on the 250. In supercross as well.

What about the rumours of you trying Anaheim 1 in January?

It is a big dream from when I was really young. I think any kid who starts riding and racing thinks about supercross and going to the U.S. and being in front of so many people in a stadium. The whole opening ceremony and your name being read out...it would be like 'Oh, my God'. I would love to try it and we need to discuss whether we will go to Anaheim. We will see. My Dad prepared a hard supercross track at home and I train a lot there.

Is your level good enough now to go?

Right now I would need some practice. If you have a good winter and you go in November or December and ride those American tracks then I think, yeah, I can do well. I know it is a

big culture change and lifestyle change to go to the USA to race but I don't think it will be a problem.

As long as you can pack the whole Gajser family in a Winnebago...

Hahaha. We will see...

Eighteen years old and on the cusp of glory means that Gajser is entering an extremely exciting phase of his career but his age and inexperience of closing out the big prizes at the highest level leaves room for improvement and development. "I think he needs more experience in the sand because you generally only find hard-pack tracks in Slovenia," believes Gariboldi, admittedly said well before his win at Assen. "I think he also needs to mature a bit with more GPs and more wins. More confidence. At the beginning of the season he put himself under too much pressure."

"I'm surprised at how fit he is...and he's hard! Which is another attribute," assesses Harvey. "He can take pain and in motocross you need to take and hide pain. He just needs to mature now but you can see it happening. I think he has the whole package but needs a bit of time for it to develop...bearing in mind he is still eighteen years old! He is a big lad so we have to watch carefully how big he gets but he also rides a 450 really well."

"Riders like Tim you can only find every ten years," asserts Gariboldi. "We don't see a rider with his talent often and it is special for everybody...especially for Honda who have signed him for the long-term!"



ALPINESTARS

Alpinestars dropped details of their 2016 International Motocross Protection and Footwear Collection last week. We have already shown their fetching Techstar riding wear and here is the next option in the range, the 'Racer'. Emphasis is on lightweight construction with several colour options. The jersey is moisture wicking and cut longer in the back to comfortably tuck into the pants that feature those cool black panelling design elements, 3D construction for knee braces and incorporated padding (anybody remember the foam inserts that most people just chuck away?). It is fabricated from various reinforced components to withstand the rigours of heat, abrasion and contact through any kind of off-road activity. The selling point for the Racer glove lies in the lightweight chassis. A close fit obviously depends on individual hand size.

Alpinestars have also launched the Tech 1 boot. They claim it is an introduction to the Tech range with the same 'DNA' as the top-of-the-range 8 and 10 in terms of quality and protection. The Tech 1 has a list of features and Alpinestars says it boasts multi material construction, flexi-blade system, ergonomic buckles and other aspects like: stamped steel toe guard for protection and durability, integrated soft foam padding surrounding the ankles and collar for comfort and fit, full technical textile lining for comfort and moisture wicking, replaceable EVA footbed features textile lining for comfort, upper Velcro® closure provides adaptable fit for wide range of leg sizes, PU gaiter seals out excessive dirt entry, rear gaiter includes rubber insert for flexibility and comfort.

No word on prices from Alpinestars just yet but expect these products to be available any time now through dealers





By Adam Wheeler
Photos by Ray Archer

PAULS JONASS IS KTM'S SOLE SHOT OF GRAND PRIX TITLE GLORY IN 2015 AND IS EMBROILED IN A DUEL TO THE WIRE WITH HRC'S TIM GAJSER. WE CHATTED ABOUT HIS PROGRESS AND THE 'UNLIKELY' SCENARIO FOR THE WORKS TEAM ROOKIE JUST BEFORE AN EVENTFUL RACE AT ASSEN...

LONE STAR: PAULS JONASS





While one 'newbie' has cut a wide path through the MXGP class another one is on the cusp of a remarkable achievement in MX2. Eighteen years old – like title rival Tim Gajser – Pauls Jonass is carrying the hopes of the factory Red Bull KTM team for 2015 after an injury-hit season for the squad. The Austrians have won both categories every year since 2010 and although all sports move in cycles it will still be harshly felt if the companies new 2016 SX-F technology does not return an FIM crown. Therefore there is a shade of pressure hanging over the Latvian who counts on the expertise and discipline of former ten times world champion Stefan Everts in his corner. Jonass has not won a Grand Prix yet – he has still to claim a chequered flag in a moto – but his six podiums (the first of which only arriving this season and one less than Gajser so far) has consistency pushed him to the point where the '41' had a red background for two rounds of the campaign.

It has been a stunning ascent for the former 125cc European Champion who only jumped into MX2 full-time in the second half of last season and ended 2014 with twenty-fourth position in the standings and just two top ten moto finishes to his name. Tied to KTM through a multi-year deal, he was drafted into the Red Bull set-up with rookie billing to Jeffrey Herlings and only his staunchest supporter would have envisaged Jonass as a virulent understudy in his first adventure on factory material and with the resources and support of the champions on-tap. He has done supremely well to deputise for Herlings and still give the orange camp a quiet degree of hope.

Whether Jonass or Gajser ultimately triumph by Glen Helen then the FIM Motocross World Championship is set for a new country to embrace motocross accomplishment and

stardom. Both athletes are barely out of their teens but already have a substantial profile in their respective countries. Although using Belgium as a training base Jonass has strong ties to his homeland where he regularly pops up in the news.

We chatted with Pauls in the pitlane at Losail this year and discovered a confident, funny and gregarious young man who had emerged from his first full winter of serious physical prep instigated by Everts. He lacks experience and maybe even some aggression compared to Gajser but is very much a potent work-in-progress at Grand Prix.

He is already waiting for us in the hotel in Italy when we arrive at the scheduled time for our chat and is also frank and open about certain subjects when the recorder is turned off. Part of me thinks Pauls will be a fine ambassador as a World Champion and is golden proof that taking the FIM series to far-flung countries like Latvia has produced talent that can scale the heights simply through the repeat presence of Grands Prix. Another side believes it might be too early for what is still a green and bubbling prospect that still has to learn about the other bundle of pressures associated with success...

How have things been after Lommel and arriving at the peak of Grand Prix...?

There were a few more calls but it was actually pretty calm! There was no feeling of extra pressure from the media. I feel pretty good with the red plate and it gives you just a little bit more when you go riding and practicing. In Mantova I was quite relaxed. I'd love to have it at the end of the season but it is not the main goal. I just need to stay consistent and without injuries.





But it must be the ultimate confidence booster. Did you have to tell yourself to calm down?
It did take some getting used to because I knew it was something big. And I think part of me still doesn't believe it! I'm not pushing too hard because of it. I'm trying to relax and enjoy the racing.

Do you think about some incidents this year like being taken-out by Alex Tonkov in Italy or that big crash in Sweden...? You could be leading MX2 with more points...

Yeah, sure. I looked back with Stefan and said "we could have had a lead of forty points!" but that's all part of it and every single rider has some bad races. Instead of [taking] points my priority is showing that I can do well. I don't worry too much about calculations at the moment.

Does it feel a bit silly now to have had the initial goal of getting in the top ten and taking a few podiums at the beginning of the season...?
(smiles) Yeah, that was 'the goal' and I really just wanted consistent top tens...but now I'm going for the championship and it is something special. I'd say that half way through the season I changed my goal to consistent top fives and even now it is still the same because those results bring good points; two fifth positions is thirty-two points at the end of the day and that's not so bad.

Do you - and the others perhaps - think that you can learn from what happened with Jordi Tixier last year and see the real value of every point in every last moto?

I think so. We all say the championship is long but it is so true that things can happen that



you would not expect. Who would have said that Herlings and Tixier would be out at the end of the season? You have to stay on two wheels – that's it. Some guys can win a championship without winning a race.

What was your closest call this year? Sweden was a big 'off'?

Yeah that was huge and I was really lucky to walk away from that one

The 'Pauls Jonass' that was in Qatar making his debut as a works rider and full-time debut in MX2 to the rider that you are now: what's changed?

I think I enjoy racing a bit more now. Less nerves. I'm pretty relaxed in the GP paddock now and to have a GP recently like Mantova where there were no European classes it was so nice!

What about on the bike...? Has that changed much?

I am a different rider and I have learnt a lot this season. Things like: 'you cannot win a race in the first few laps' and I think I am even more aggressive now when it comes to making passes because I have seen the others. When they do it to you then you need to be ready to give it back and then they start to respect you more.

Things haven't been made easier for you by the fact that you were the only Red Bull KTM rider for a while...

It was really strange. My father said to me in Mantova: "there are two race trucks here...and they are all for you!". It is something you would never have imagined a year or two ago; in fact at that time I was dreaming about the factory team! Nevermind having all these mechanics just for me. It is a good feeling...even if it is unfortunate that the others are injured. We've been working great, and with the team and on the bike it has been about the small things that might give us a small piece of a second a lap that can make a difference.

When are you nineteen?

In January.

So you could join Herlings as being another 'young' world champion. Do you stop yourself thinking about that? The party, the feeling, the repercussions?

(laughs) I try not to think about it! We will see in the USA. There is still almost a month to go. For sure it is somewhere in my mind.

What will it be like back in Latvia if you win this thing?

Well, I will be the first! My manager was a winner in sidecar but that is a bit of a different level. I think it will be a big deal. I have already had people back home telling me that my podium finishes were something unbelievable for Latvia. Thinking about the history of the sport and the way it gets written about in the papers I think it will be huge actually.



"I HAVE A BIG FANBASE WITH MY FAMILY – MY MUM, DAD AND MY SISTERS EVEN IF MY MUM DOESN'T LIKE TO WATCH THE RACES – AND ALL OUR CLOSE FRIENDS AND WHEN I AM HOME SOMEBODY COMES AROUND EVERY DAY. I CAN REALLY FEELING THE SUPPORT FROM THEM..."

MX2 TITLE FIGHT: PAULS JONASS



What will it be like back in Latvia if you win this thing?

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At this stage if you don't win it will you be disappointed having been so close?

I will not be disappointed-

Really?

Really. It was not what I set out to do. I wanted to be top eight by the end of the season... maybe. Together with Stefan we have already said that to finish in the top three will be a big bonus. If I am fifth or fourth then that will be a little bit disappointing...but it will still be a good result. So that means I don't have pressure whereas Guillod and Gajser are there to win the championship. There is no expectation from the team or the people around. They let me do my thing and I'm relaxed.

Can you imagine what it will feel like at the U.S. GP if there are only a few points in it?

That's going to be tough! We saw it recently in the AMA. Mentally I think it is a tough situation.

You are lucky to have a guy who has won ten championships behind you so what has the advice been like from him recently?

He just tries to keep me relaxed. Before we flew to Mantova he had me cutting the grass at his place. I really didn't feel that I was flying to a GP the next day. For sure he has some really good advice. He helps with the riding but especially with the mental side. He's a good coach.

Has Stefan become more influential during the season?

For sure because I have become better. We started working together last July and it has

built up. I was in Belgium and following his advice in October and we're in contact pretty much every day.

It has been a good season until this point and it might be a bit stressful now but all of this experience has to be a massive help for 2016...

For sure but it will be a new year. I will work hard in the off-season and hopefully make the same big step that I did this season. It will be tough but I want to be at the front from the start.

If you have an image of yourself performing at your best – say 100% - where are you now? 60-70-80% or more?

Ooooh; I don't know. I think my best race was at Argentina this year; that was the best 'Pauls Jonass'. In the last few weeks and after Lommel we have been building up my fitness again and I've been getting better and better. I think we can do more this off-season and put another 10-15% on top of what we are doing now. We can still work a lot.

Maybe Jeffrey did not think that the Pauls in Argentina was the best...[he knocked the former champion off on the first lap of the first moto]

Sure! It wasn't so bad between us but it was not a good feeling at all to make your teammate crash. I did not want to do it at all but... shit happens. It was a little bit tense but Jeffrey was OK with it in the end.

Is there a part of you that looks at your predicament and thinks it might be a bit too much, too soon?

Er...yeah. Sometimes it feels like that. To be leading the world championship in your first full year is fast...but it is the proof of the work I did in the winter. It was such a huge step for me and at times it felt like it was impossible!

MX2 TITLE FIGHT: PAULS JONASS



WHAT NOW FOR REED...?

By Steve Matthes

The Lucas Oil Pro Motocross Championships wrapped up a little over a week ago with an unexpected mechanical DNF by Red Bull KTM's Marvin Musquin putting a dampener on the expected Musquin/Jeremy Martin battle to the line. Just two points separated them coming in but with Marvin's bike sputtering to a stop just two laps into the first moto, Martin walked to his second 250MX title in two years.

It was a great year of outdoor racing between the two and unfortunately for Marvin, it was his last chance for a 250MX title as he moves up to the 450 for the Red Bull guys in 2016. Martin's got nothing to prove outdoors but 2016 will be his last year in the 250 class and he needs to show that he can ride indoors as well as he does outdoors. Yes he got a win last season but there were also the times he didn't make the main. That will be Martin's goal next season.

Chad Reed's in the news again as after closing up shop on his Team Two-Two about halfway through the outdoors, he's been a man without a team. But he's not without a bike as he's been posting images and videos on social media of him riding a Yamaha. Is there a return to the brand he broke in with for Reed?

Well, we're not sure yet. We know that factory Yamaha, led by Keith McCarty, is trying to get back into the business of having a race team once again and we know that they're trying to get Monster Energy on-board with this effort.

In our industry, if you want to get anything done, hit up an energy drink company right? Reed's onboard with just focusing on riding and he wants to do one more year, maybe two, on blue with a supercross-only deal. It appears that this attempt by Yamaha is Reed's best chance to make something happen for 2016 and he also wants to become a test rider/mentor for Yamaha after he retires a la Jeremy McGrath for Honda until this year.

I reached out to Reed for this story and he reported that there's nothing finalized and he doesn't know when anything is going to happen. He's contracted to ride the Monster Energy Cup October 17th in Las Vegas per terms of his Monster Energy deal as well as his Discount Tire sponsorship so he's trying to put something in place by then.

What if Yamaha can't make it happen? Well, plan B would be Reed trying to get back on a Honda for the factory team. Honda's been on the record as stating that they don't want a third rider this year but perhaps for Reed, the marketing department would make a push...

Reed certainly has his critics but the guy was one of the few to win a race in 2015, he scored some podiums and threw away maybe twice as many with some - for him - uncharacteristic mistakes. The old guy still has plenty of speed indoors and combine that with his popularity in the pits and we predict he'll land on his feet somewhere. He's hoping it's blue but stay tuned...



At the last round of the nationals in Indiana the folks at MX Sports put together a Legends and Heroes race before the motos started. The group of riders including Kevin Windham, Robbie Reynard, Jeff Emig, Ricky Carmichael, Tim Ferry, Jeff Stanton and Guy Cooper practiced on Friday and Saturday morning before the gate drop. There was also an autograph signing thrown in there and many of the people really enjoyed this whole deal.

The riders themselves seemed to enjoy it as well; Cooper launched the over-hundred foot uphill triple on the second lap of practice. Although he's 53 years old, it goes to show you that you never really lose what you can do well. Cooper and Stanton wore their original gear from back in the day with Stanton busting out a brand new set of AXO gear made for him for the 1990 Motocross des Nations!

The race itself was won by (who else?) Carmichael with Reynard and Ferry rounding out the podium but that was secondary to the amount of smiles by the fans and riders afterwards. Props to MX Sports for putting this together and making time for the legends and I'm sure judging by the reception, they'll be more of these in the future planned a little further out as there's no doubt this was a big hit.





MotoGP

OCTO BRITISH GRAND PRIX

SILVERSTONE · AUGUST 31st · Rnd 12 of 18

MotoGP winner: Valentino Rossi, Yamaha

Moto2 winner: Johan Zarco, Kalex

Moto3 winner: Danny Kent, Honda

Blog by David Emmett & Matthew Roberts, Photos by Repsol Honda,
www.yamahamotogp.com, teamtech3.fr, Ducati Corse Press, Milagro, Monster Energy

**ROSSI
LETS IT
RAIN**





PLAY

Remarkably last weekend saw Rossi's first win at one of bike racing's most historic venues. From one star to another (below). Brad Pitt was at Silverstone promoting his narration of new film 'Hitting the Apex'. Big MotoGP fan apparently...



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Lepoard Racing



Victory for Danny Kent as the stats relating to Barry Sheene continue to crop up (first British World Champ?). Frustration for Crutchlow however who may be one of the few hoping for the Circuit of Wales to hurry and complete construction. Petrucci follows Dovizioso for a fantastic first podium







Another helmet malfunction for Lorenzo with a foggy visor and a 'moment' with Espargaro rattled '99'. He admitted that he lacked the pace of the leaders in the wet. Lorenzo had won two of the previous three Grands Prix at the circuit



THROW BACKS...

By Matthew Roberts

It is impossible to visit Silverstone without sensing the abiding air of nostalgia that hangs over the iconic British circuit. At this year's MotoGP it seemed that the feeling was particularly prominent, and not only because Adam Ant was rocking out in the entertainment zone in the circuit infield on Saturday evening.

Who knows? Maybe it was the 80s post-punk legend's lyrics drifting across the paddock and through the riders' motorhome windows that inspired the *Prince Charming* of MotoGP to roll back the years on Sunday. Valentino Rossi's first ever win at Silverstone summed up his remarkable season; just when you write him off, he comes back with the most unlikely victory to keep himself in championship contention. It seems only right that such a famous circuit now has our sport's most celebrated name on its roll call of winners; especially after he became the first ever two-wheel star to be inducted into the prestigious British Racing Drivers' Club last week.

Rossi wasn't the only one to *Stand and Deliver* (you see what I am doing now) on Sunday. Danilo Petrucci's sensational first podium came in a Grand Prix sponsored by the same company that backs his Pramac Ducati Team, a result Octo Telematics could never have envisaged when they secured the naming rights to this round back in June.

By the way, one of Octo's main products is a kind of GPS technology that monitors driver and rider behaviour on the road, gathering data that clients can then pass on to insurers and secure lower premiums for good conduct. Maybe some riders might like to see that technology implemented into MotoGP in the future? Imagine a little light on Cal Crutchlow's dash warning him that he had a reckless young team-mate heading straight for

him from 50 yards back... I don't know about lower insurance premiums but it could certainly have saved Lucio Cecchinello a few quid.

There was more nostalgia for the hardiest of the 73,000 fans that braved the constant drizzle to soak up on Sunday evening, with the revival of Yamaha's famous ProAm series, which was originally launched back in 1980. Back then the championship pitched fresh young talent against established stars, riding identical Yamaha RD350LC production bikes for good prize money and national recognition.

The ProAm launched the career of one of the UK's most successful ever Grand Prix riders, Niall Mackenzie, who was back on board with a bunch of old rivals and friends, racing recovered RD250LCs that had been painstakingly collected from all over Europe and restored on the quiet so as not to suddenly increase their value and make the event unaffordable. Almost three decades later, the years had done nothing to dull their timeless two-stroke appeal, or the speed of Mackenzie, who romped to victory in the time-honoured British summer weather.

For all the retrospect that hung with the dampness in the air at Silverstone, it wouldn't be MotoGP if we weren't also looking to the future and those hardy British fans certainly got a hint of good times to come when Danny Kent splashed to his sixth victory of the season in the Moto3 race, extending his advantage at the top of the World Championship to 70 points.

Oh, and as the season enters its decisive phase in all three categories it's worth noting that Adam Ant has new album out. It's called *Bravest of the Brave*... maybe the title contenders should give it a listen.





More podium joy...this time in Moto3 as Hanika makes the breakthrough. Below the clouds over Silverstone in practice indicate what would come on Sunday



CLASSIFICATION & CHAMPIONSHIP

MotoGP RESULT

Riders

1	Valentino Rossi, ITA	Yamaha
2	Danilo Petrucci, ITA	Ducati
3	Andrea Dovizioso, ITA	Ducati
4	Jorge Lorenzo, SPA	Yamaha
5	Dani Pedrosa, SPA	Honda

MotoGP CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 12 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Valentino Rossi	236
2 Jorge Lorenzo	224
3 Marc Marquez	159
4 Andrea Iannone	150
5 Andrea Dovizioso	120

Moto2 RESULT

Riders

1	Johann Zarco, FRA	Kalex
2	Alex Rins, SPA	Kalex
3	Tito Rabat, SPA	Kalex
4	Alex Marquez, SPA	Kalex
5	Jonas Folger, GER	Kalex

Moto2 CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 12 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Johann Zarco	249
2 Alex Rins	164
3 Tito Rabat	161
4 Sam Lowes	128
5 Thomas Luthi	125



Moto3 RESULT

Riders

1	Danny Kent, GBR	Honda
2	Jakub Kornfeil, CZE	KTM
3	Karel Hanika, CZE	KTM
4	Jorge Martin, SPA	Mahindra
5	Brad Binder, RSA	KTM

Moto3 CHAMPIONSHIP AFTER 12 of 18 ROUNDS

Riders	Points
1 Danny Kent	224
2 Enea Bastianini	154
3 Romano Fenati	126
4 Efren Vazquez	116
5 Miguel Oliveira	114

THE BRITISH ARE COMING (AGAIN)

By David Emmett www.motomatters.com

Once upon a time, British motorcycle racers ruled the world. In the '50s, '60s and '70s, British riders won thirteen of the first twenty premier class titles, then four of the next ten. Legendary names such as Geoff Duke, John Surtees, Mike Hailwood, Phil Read and Barry Sheene filled the history books, with a supporting cast of hundreds of privateers filling the grids and taking race wins. There were always Italians, truly great Italians, challenging British supremacy, successfully in the case of Giacomo Agostini, but fundamentally, Grand Prix racing was a very British affair.

Then the colonials came, saw, and conquered, transferring the skills they learned riding bucking, sliding bikes on dirt tracks in the USA and Australia to the lairy, unpredictable 500cc two strokes taking over the racing scene. British riders were reduced to a supporting role, chasing but never challenging Kenny Roberts, Freddie Spencer, Eddie Lawson, Wayne Gardner, Wayne Rainey, Mick Doohan. The decline continued through the 1990s, as native fans transferred their loyalties to World Superbikes, where the UK delivered a string of champions. There were still fast British riders, but they were snowed under in a deluge of quick Italians and Spaniards, and a solitary exceptional Australian.

At last, there is a resurgence of the British in Grand Prix racing. In the premier class, Cal Crutchlow and Bradley Smith have both stood on the podium, Crutchlow multiple times. Scott Redding won Moto2 races and challenged for the championship, and now Sam Lowes is following in Redding's footsteps. Danny Kent is well on his way to becoming the first British motorcycle racing champion since Barry Sheene, utterly dominating the Moto3 class, while John McPhee showed what he is capable of with a podium at Indianapolis. Over in the World Superbike pad-

dock, the British domination is virtually complete. Perhaps the most interesting feature of the great British racing revival is the limited role that racing in the UK has played, at least in the Grand Prix paddock. The route to World Superbikes may go through the outstanding British Superbikes series run by Stuart Higgs, but riders with ambitions of Grand Prix racing have nearly all had to leave the UK to make it into GP. Bradley Smith went to Spain to join the MotoGP Academy, the forerunner of the Red Bull Rookies Cup. Scott Redding raced in the Spanish CEV championship before entering the 125s. Danny Kent came up through the Red Bull Rookies, before entering 125s. Brad Ray, Kyle Ryde and Rory Skinner are all focused on the Spanish CEV championship and Red Bull Rookies, rather than UK-based series. Though both Cal Crutchlow and Sam Lowes progressed from British Superbikes to the World Superbike paddock, the rule still seems to be that the path to MotoGP goes through Spain, rather than through the ACU.

It is a successful route indeed though. Ahead of the British round at Silverstone, both Bradley Smith and Cal Crutchlow announced they would be extending their contracts with their current teams, Smith staying with Tech 3 for 2016, Crutchlow being retained by LCR Honda – now thankfully rid of the scandal-hit CWM sponsorship – for 2016, with an option to stay for 2017 as well. On Sunday after the race, Scott Redding announced he had signed a one-year deal with Ducati to race at Pramac, giving Ducati an extra option to retain him for 2017, a deal signed at Brno. Danny Kent is close to a deal which could see him move up to MotoGP, possibly on a Honda, or head to Moto2 aboard a very competitive machine. Even Sam Lowes' deal with Aprilia is likely to be announced soon, the Lincolnshire lad probably taking a circuitous route through Moto2 first.



It is probably for the best that both Kent and Lowes will not be moving up to MotoGP in 2016 (though in the case of Kent, I am not 100% convinced that he won't). Looking at next year's line up of MotoGP riders, there could be eight Spaniards, and up to six riders from the British Isles, including Eugene Laverty (this blog is far too short to cover the complex history of Ireland, united and divided, from William the Conqueror to the Dutch usurper, King Billy, the Easter Uprising and more). That is bad for international TV sales, as audiences want a home-town hero to cheer for. As TV rights are good for over a third of Dorna's income, most of which goes to the teams, having a wide range of nationalities on the grid is key to the financial health of the sport. Purists may frown on the dominant role of money in the sport, but running motorcycle racing requires a very large amount of money, and somebody has to pay.

Have the signed-up Brits made the right choice? Bradley Smith's contract was richly deserved, and the one-year deal is about making himself available for a factory ride when the seats come free at the end of 2016. Actually securing a factory ride could be difficult: Marc Márquez and Jorge Lorenzo are safe at their respective factories for as long as they want, while Valentino Rossi shows no inclination to stop racing any time soon. Dani Pedrosa has a seat at Repsol Honda until Maverick Viñales, or possibly Alex Rins become available, HRC having no reason to give that seat to anyone else. Ducati is the only option in the near future, potentially opening up an avenue for Scott Redding, his signing at Pramac a smart choice, though it may not seem that way. Cal Crutchlow, who will be 30 in October, is nearer the end than the beginning of his career, and a solid two years with one of the best satellite teams in the paddock is his best chance for podiums, or even wins, though it has been nearly ten years since the last time a satellite bike won a race.

What of Lowes and Kent? At Brno, Kent was giving hard thought to the idea of a switch straight to MotoGP, 2016 being the ideal time to make the jump. New tyres and new electronics mean that he would enter a much more level playing field than in previous years, and a long-term contract would give him time to learn without the pressure of losing his ride at the end of the year. Then again, Jack Miller's experience has shown that while it is possible, it is not easy, and requires a lot of hard work, the right attitude and dedication. Those are three qualities that Kent has in spades but it still may be an option to go to Moto2 with a good team and competitive material. His Kiefer team have already won a Moto2 title with Stefan Bradl, and could help Kent achieve just that.

Lowes, on the other hand, is said to be torn. On the one hand, he recognises that he can't afford to turn down an opportunity to go straight to MotoGP. On the other, he still sees a chance to become the first rider ever to win a title in both Grand Prix and World Superbike paddocks, if he could add the 2016 Moto2 title to his 2013 World Supersport crown. He has offers from top teams in Moto2, with the pick of Kalex bikes. The offer he is said to have from Aprilia will likely still be there for 2017, with Alvaro Bautista a candidate to be moved on from the factory team.

Both Kent and Lowes face some very tough choices. They are not choices I would like to be making.





Check out the 'Matte Collection' for 6D Helmets around their award-winning ATR-1 Moto model. Colourways involve Camo Black, White, Green, Wedge and Raptor. The range will be available from mid-late September and represent a cool new design direction for the brand.

The ATR-1 is the lid that caused a massive stir in the market thanks to its Omni Directional Suspension technology and is the base of the philosophy of 6D. The performance features of the helmet (used by the likes of Eli Tomac and the Kemea Yamaha team in Grand Prix) includes: 2 separate EPS liners separated by 27 elastic isolation dampers, 3-dimensional displacement of the inner liner upon impact, uncouples the impact force at the outer shell from the rider's head, superior performance for low, medium, and high-velocity impacts, significantly reduces Linear Accelerations, increases 'Time-to-Peak' values by roughly double (lessens severity), self re-centering alignment when the impact load is removed, Superior airflow, heat transfer, and sweat evaporation via air-gap between layers. Overall, the ATR-1 is a clever and seriously equipped piece of kit with a primary function to offer protection as opposed to lightweight or a radical profile.





BACKPAGE

Monster Energy Girls
By Monster Energy







'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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